

Social Media Marketing

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There isn't a "secret formula" to online success that's exclusive of all else. It's a smart mix and proper handling of a strategic plan including Social Media Marketing!

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(As long as you don't change any part.)

Social Media Marketing

Let me tell you why I love the idea of Social Media Marketing. I believe it will transform the web, the people, and business online. Focus is shifting to not only the ability to connect with people, but the absolute need to do so.

Don't be intimidated. In fact, be happy! The *emergence* of Social Media offers a rare chance for you to move ahead of your competition much faster. I'm not saying it won't take a lot of work, I'm just saying this is a tremendous opportunity for you regardless of where you are today on your path to success online.

The Internet wouldn't survive if it never connected people with each other and remained an isolated environment. It *had* to change. People need and want to connect with each other. You need and want to connect, too!

When I first came online in the spring of 1996, the Internet was much different than it is today. The changes have been absolutely amazing! However, even back then there were attempts to bring people together through communities, which is part of what this "new" Social Media is today.

There was a community that I belonged to for a short while called "Firefly". It was a place where people shared their interests with others - favorite songs, movies, books, and the like. I don't know what happened to that community but it was there in 1996. Classmates.com also started early on. It's still around.

I taught at the [Virtual University](#) in 1996, still do. My point is that the Virtual University was then and still is the "new" social media.

So what exactly is Social Media?

You probably have a good idea but the reality is that it's a conversation, participation, connectedness, community.

Basic forms of Social Media are:

- Social networks ([MySpace](#), [Facebook](#), [Bebo](#))
- Content communities ([Flickr](#), [YouTube](#), [del.icio.us](#))
- Wikis ([Wikipedia](#))
- Blogs (Millions of blogs!)
- Podcasts ([iTunes](#), [Podcast Alley](#))
- Forums (Around before "Social Media" was coined)
- Microblogging ([Twitter](#))
- Tagging (Human indexing or shared bookmarking, like [Digg.com](#))

That's not a complete picture, but it serves its purpose for now. We'll discuss these in greater detail in a bit. These brief definitions at least give us a useful starting point.

What you need to begin thinking about is how social media affects you as an online businessperson and what your strategy will be for engaging with it. The scale and speed of innovation in social media requires that we not only learn about it, but also start implementing it as soon as possible.

To truly understand Social Media and the effect it will have, take a look at what has happened to television. When the cable companies brought us hundreds of channels, the major networks lost a huge portion of their audience. "Niche" channels such as the History channel, the Science channel, Discovery, the Food Network, DIY, shopping channels, and many more, came out of nowhere and took substantial shares away from the major networks.

Today, there's hardly a discernible "mainstream". Our world is shifting toward millions of specialty niches instead of mass markets. The "hard-to-find" isn't so hard to find online. And, of course people will gravitate toward these niches because they more closely satisfy their individual interests.

What this means to you

The Internet allows for practically anyone to start an online business in just about any niche. Social media offers the chance to attract more traffic and establish a larger presence online. You have the chance to become an authority voted on by the people – so be real! People buy from people, not sales letters.

Remember that social media is really an answer to the call of the people online. They don't want marketers invading their space. **Everyone is rightfully jaded today.** People online are rapidly maturing in the marketplace. Many are quite savvy now. Most have "been there done that". Yes, there are still newbies, but it won't take them long to catch on, especially with social media.

Social media is coming about because people want to take back the Internet! There is a philosophical significance here.

Back in 1996 (and before and after) people expected that most things were free online. Information was everywhere. People wrote articles and tutorials to help others. They answered questions in forums and even via email willingly and freely. It was a giving environment (though mostly one-way).

Then came the marketers! Of course, any smart marketer goes to where the people are!

When I first decided to start a business online everyone seemed secretive about the marketing end of things. The information was for sale though. I started buying ebooks and attending teleseminars about "how to market effectively online". They were generally priced right around \$29. It wasn't long before those prices rose to \$59, \$79 and then \$97. After all, if we would buy for \$29, wouldn't we pay even more? Probably...

And we did. The prices rose to \$197, \$297, \$497... We still bought. Prices kept going up. Recently the price for this information seems to be around \$2,000. And we're still buying! And the marketers are getting even richer. (No offense intended.)

There's definitely money to be made online. And, it's not just in the Internet Marketing field, though it is highly lucrative if you are one of the Gurus or can get connected to them. They'll be the first to tell you that the best way to make connections is to go to one of their (quite expensive) live seminars.

Social Media Marketing gives you an alternative.

Instead of connecting with gurus, you connect with people, interested people. Peers, friends, and friends of friends (exponentially) reached through word-of-mouth. You build relationships. You become the go-to person yourself!

First a word of caution: you must be careful to not take the marketing mentality that you have been taught and use it in the social media circles - unless what you've learned includes information precisely for this area.

In Social Media Marketing you want to create "**mind share.**" Don't go into it thinking "market share". You could be chewed up and spit out fast!

I remember reading something a while back that helps make this point. Someone asked, "How do you create an authority site?" The answer was, "You don't create an authority site, you become one." Great point. I wrote it down. I'd love to give credit where it's due, but I don't remember where I first read it.

Your marketing tactics within social media **MUST** be different. And that's what I want to talk to you about.

First, I want to drive home a point as to how big social media is. [Click here](#) to get a bird's eye view of the current size of this phenomenon. Near the lower left corner of this web page you'll see a scroll button. Click it and take it all in. It's the "Complete Web 2.0 Directory" and it will blow your mind!

Go ahead, I'll wait here... [Go on ...](#)

Pretty amazing, isn't it.

So why do you need to care about social media marketing?

It's where the people are, plain and simple.

From all the research I did in the past few months to write this report for you, I've found some very interesting (and motivating) facts:

From Comscore.com:

- Social networking giant Facebook.com reaped the benefits of opening registration to all users, jumping 81 percent versus December 2006 to 34.7 million visitors in December 2007.
- Wikipedia Sites gained 34 percent to reach nearly 52 million visitors, continuing its reign as the Web's most popular reference hub.
- Leading classified site Craigslist.org jumped 74 percent to 24.5 million visitors
- In December 2007 nearly 141 million US Internet users watched more than 10 billion videos.

Quick facts:

In a typical month 64% of Internet users go to MySpace.com, 29% to Facebook, 35% visit YouTube, and 27% visit Wikipedia.

MySpace gains between 100,000 and 250,000 new members every week! Nearly half of them are 35 years or older.

Social media users are also more likely to spend online and have a different spending profile. They have an income that is 20% higher with 25% disposable income vs Non-Social at 17%.

Your customers use social media!

Understanding trends is essential to your business. The bad news is that the average marketer is clueless on how to use social media to their advantage and if you use it wrong, you'll pay the price.

Each new "thing" often compels us to rethink our strategies. This is both good and not good because while it can help us look ahead, it can also keep us jumping from one thing to another and never make any progress at all – or even make us lose ground that we already gained.

This particular subject, social media, is important to learn about and apply because...

Your customers are in control today.

If your only goal is *short-term* profits, it will be evident in your social media marketing.

Let me ask you something...

If you could do anything that you want for a living, what would it be? If you didn't have to work at all, would you still do it?

You see, if you CARE about what you're doing, you'll not only enjoy it more but you'll be more interesting to others. You'll even be more productive. It's a great life and business strategy that would tie in quite nicely with social media.

Think collaboration and creativity. Revolutionize the way you communicate with your market. Realize that not only do you have something to offer, but others have something to add to the equation that will make the "whole" more appealing to everyone.

Is your "marketing voice" different than your "real voice"? It shouldn't be. Marketing is a conversation and about relationships and even more so today.

Think about this...

Ebay's product is the **collective activity of all of its users**. It grows organically in response to user activity.

Amazon is **perfecting user engagement** and by doing so produces far better results. Amazon's sales outpace competitors, including the large national chain bookstores! Go see what Amazon is doing to engage visitors. That's an incredible study of using social media marketing the right way.

Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, is being **continually written and updated by its users**. It's in the top 100 most visited websites. People love to contribute and be engaged. In fact, the current political scene is such a powerful topic at Wikipedia that they have to "patrol" the profiles of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and John McCain continually, weeding out opinion from fact.

Reviews are social media, too, and they are **highly regarded**. "Power Reviews" (an e-tailing group) found that nearly **9 out of 10** U.S. online buyers surveyed in February 2008 read customer reviews at least "some of the time" *before* making a purchase.

It's not "Us vs Them"

You will probably find that the fun of discovery in this social media landscape is well worth investing your time in for its own sake, but there's much more to it.

First seek to identify where your market is "hanging out" online, what they want, and how they react in the environment they are creating for themselves.

I don't recommend venturing much into social media *marketing* without understanding the rules of engagement. Learn what you can, do it right, and that will put you ahead of those that jump in with both feet not knowing the cost of doing it wrong. (Google "[Dell Hell](#)")

Most online communities don't welcome traditional direct or hard sell techniques. An effective strategy would require much more finesse. Social media marketing campaigns need to be targeted to the community you want to reach with a message that appeals to them *and* invites contribution.

Be generous, be helpful as much as you can! You still need to observe *netiquette*. No one wants Social Media to become corrupted like spammers corrupted email. Greed and predatory behavior could destroy it for all of us.

Dan Gillmor appropriately calls Web 2.0 "we, the media," a world in which "the former audience" makes the call as to what is and what isn't important.

In actuality, my understanding is that "Web 2.0" refers to the applications (software or programs) that make social media possible. Social media networks, put together from these applications, makes it possible for people to participate. Either way, it's the "we" that's important here.

In a large way, your potential market must be treated as co-developers. This is a radically different strategy but one in which actually brings about a truer potential of this thing we call the web. Technologies such as blogs, social bookmarking, wikis, podcasts, RSS feeds, social software, and web application programming interfaces (APIs) provide enhancements over read-only websites.

This is a web where there is genuine interactivity. People can upload as well as download! They can contribute instead of just consume. Web 2.0 websites allow users to do more than just retrieve information.

It's a participatory web.

The really interesting thing about being involved in the Social Media arena is that once you're involved in a community, it's really hard to leave it. Loyalty is huge. A sense of friendship develops and there's a definitely investment in the community that's very difficult to give up.

Social media transforms people from content readers into content publishers, rooted in conversations between authors, people and peers.

A social network service focuses on building online **social networks** for **communities** of people who share interest and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. It offers a collection of ways for users to interact, such as through chat, messaging, email, video, voice chat, file sharing, blogging, discussion groups, and so on.

The main types of social networking services are those that contain directories of categories, (such as former classmates), a means to connect with friends (usually with self-description / profile pages), and recommender systems linked to trust. Popular methods now combine many of these, MySpace, Bebo and Facebook, etc.

Here are short descriptions of some other social media applications:

Wiki – a wiki is software that allows users to create, edit, and link web pages easily (such as [Wikipedia](#)). Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites, and to power community websites.

Blogs – a blog (or weblog) is a website where entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. “Blog” can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog. A typical blog combines text, images, and links outside the blog, and other media. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs.

Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (artlog) photographs (photoblog) sketchblog, videos (vlog), music (MP3 blog), and audio (podcasting). These are part of a wider network of social media.

With an interactive blog people can get a sense of popularity and interest of others through comments and links. You can even get a sense of how much traffic each item gets.

[WordPress](#) is an open source (free) program that you can set up for a blog on your own site. Many hosting companies offer this as a “Value Application” with a simple install from your control panel.

Micro-blogging is another type of blogging that consists of blogs with very short posts, such as [Twitter](#).

As of December 2007, blog search engine [Technorati](#) was tracking more than 112 Million blogs.

In a **social bookmarking** system, users save links to web pages that they want to remember and/or share. Usually public, but they can be saved privately, or

shared only with specified people or groups and private domains. [del.icio.us](#) is an excellent example of a social bookmarking system, as is

Most social bookmark services encourage users to organize their bookmarks with informal tags. They enable viewing bookmarks associated with a chosen tag, and include information about the number of users who have bookmarked them.

A **podcast** is a collection of digital media files that are distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and personal computers. [iTunes](#) offers a vast selection of podcasts.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content such as blog entries, news headlines, or podcasts. An RSS document (feed or channel) contains either a summary of content from an associated web site or the full text. RSS makes it possible for people to keep up with their favorite web sites in an automated manner that's easier than checking them manually. RSS makes it easier for people to keep up since time is always limited. They can't possibly visit each site that they like daily to see if new content is available.

Rss content is read by using an "RSS reader," "feed reader" or "aggregator. The user subscribes to a feed by entering the feed's link into the reader or by clicking an RSS icon initiating the subscription process. The reader checks the user's subscribed feeds regularly for new content, downloading updates that it finds.

The easiest way to read blogs is to subscribe to ones you find interesting using the [Bloglines](#), [Rojo](#) or [Newsgator](#) newsreader services. You can find blogs on topics that you're interested in by using search engines like [Technorati](#) or [Google Blog Search](#). If you find a blog that's of particular interest to you, look for its 'blogroll' (list of recommended blogs) – it's a great way of exploring further.

Social media is mainly in how it is distributed and shared, not in how it's created. Anything can be social media if it is put in the right environment. A news story becomes social once it is placed on You Tube. It wasn't created as social, but it can become social.

The Social Media Platform is about relationships. It's about human nature and personal connections we make with information. As we shift, one thing remains, everyone is looking for meaningful information.

There is so much information on the internet that's available for free. The only cost is the time it takes to find it.

Social Media is all about being human. It is about conversing with your neighbor, sharing ideas with a world famous author, or even sharing a joke with someone around the world. The "big boys" of the search engine world are finding

themselves at the mercy of popular opinion as community sites encourage users to filter information in the most personal way that they can.

Marketers and fans alike are transforming what is *new* and *interesting* into this worldwide communication phenomenon. Without them, many people may not know or understand the concept. Without them I don't think it would move along at such a fast pace!

Social media won't pass you by.

It's pretty safe to say that somewhere you or your offerings will be posted somewhere online someday, and quite possibly more often than you would imagine... good or bad. You may *choose* not to be a part of the social media scene, but that *doesn't* mean that you won't be.

In my research, one of the best pieces of advice given was to build every piece of content on your site like a blog – that means RSS, tagging and bookmarking functionality for every page and feed. The more you allow your content to be accessed remotely, tagged and bookmarked, the more you'll engage with the wider community.

(Side Note: It's not very difficult to get a WordPress blog up and running on your site either! I can show you how in the near future. If you're going to buy hosting, get it at [BetterWebBusiness.com](#) for as little as \$3.99 per month. If you're given a choice between servers, choose *Linux*, not *Windows*. Windows is not compatible with WordPress.)

When Social Media Marketing is done right, the market becomes connoisseurs of information within niches of interest to them – like yours. They contribute information and it equates to set them apart. They can become your word-of-mouth force because peers trust peers. The trendsetters, so to speak, are peers and others whose opinions are respected. You can become a trendsetter among trendsetters about your niche.

The goals of each Social Media Marketing (SMM) program or campaign will differ for every business, but most will involve some form of building an idea or brand awareness, increasing visibility, encouraging brand feedback and dialogue -- and thereby selling products or services.

What you need

You need to have other people "digg" your latest blog post, bookmark your site, rate your lens on Squidoo or HubPages, post comments on your guest book or blog, and so on. You need other people willing to help. The best way to achieve

that is to be in a community of like-minded people that are all willing to reciprocate efforts to build page rank, search engine rankings and traffic.

Imagine a community that would grow constantly and be enthusiastic and excited to help promote your site because they know it will be reciprocated. Imagine gaining backlinks (not from a link farm, or reciprocal directory that holds thousands of links) but quality backlinks to help your site gain PR (page rank) and move up in natural search results.

Imagine getting your new or neglected Squidoo lens or HubPage to go from the bottom of the pack to a top ranking in a category within a week or two.

Imagine people "digging" your pages, bookmarking your site, and helping to build quality traffic to your site or blog. And all with far less effort than ever before!

Social Media can be a fabulous marketing tool, but if you don't have support and knowledge, it's a long hard road to success.

In Closing

SMM cannot replace all internet marketing strategies. It must be used in conjunction with other forms of marketing. Placing "all your eggs in one basket" has never been a good plan in my view. Don't stop everything else you're doing to go strictly in this direction. Use it as another avenue, as a way of reaching those you may not have ever reached otherwise.

Your marketing arsenal needs to include quality content, keyword research, search engine optimization, link building strategies, list building, advertising, and social media, among other things. I will be telling more about these methods as well in the near future.

There isn't a "secret formula" to online success that is exclusive of all else. It's a smart mix and proper handling of a **strategic plan**.

What's Next

I've deliberately left a lot out of this report even though I have well over a hundred pages of notes... **because more words won't necessarily help at this time. It's in the *doing* that true understanding comes.**

I'd like to invite you to design your strategic plan within a social group that we build together. You are reading this because you've subscribed to one of my lists on Internet Marketing (or were forwarded this report by a friend, or read about it on my blog). We have a common interest and a shared goal. Let's team up and help each other create greater success online.

I've actually been involved in Social Media Marketing for nearly two years. I played with it a while before getting more heavily involved, but I've learned a lot of ins and outs that could help you ease into the mix, if you haven't already done so, or if you haven't had much success with it.

You'll need to be willing to put your own work into the plan, it's not something that I can do for you. I'll be a guide and others in the group will help -- and there will be **no charge** whatsoever. Everyone is welcome.

This will be somewhat unstructured, since I have to work at my web development business, just as you have to work at your income producer, but I do plan on putting out a "goal for the week" that will move you forward in your online marketing endeavors. It won't all be SMM, as I mentioned previously, but that will be the main focus. We will discuss other strategies as well, and we can implement what best suits our individual purpose. You can ask questions, offer guidance in areas that you are knowledgeable in, ask and give advice, set goals and report progress, shout out successes, offer praises to others, support each other in our efforts, invite accountability, and overall, participate as a member of a community interested in each other's success.

So, what do you think? Now that you know more details, do you want to join in? If so, please go to my new blog at [DandDWebEnterprises.com](#) and leave a comment. While you're there, check out the video I have posted that's an intriguing way to explain this Web 2.0 / Social Media phenomenon. (See the link in the "Recent Posts" section in the left column.)

To Your Online Success,

Deb Augur
[www.MyWebGal.com](#)
[www.DandDWebEnterprises.com](#)

P.S. Feel free to give this report away to your friends, all I ask is that you don't change anything, particularly the link to my blog, as I want a lot of people to join our community!

P.P.S. I spent a lot of time researching specifics on the subject presented here, all within the last few months. There are so many wonderful and brilliant people on the web that offer this information free of charge (and many that do charge). My sincere thanks to all those that contributed in some way to my research and report. I hope to include a full resource list in the near future, though unfortunately I don't have the names or URLs of all the people and places that I learned from. Again, I'd like to express my appreciation for the assistance, information and advice so freely given.